

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 18, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McCarthy, and Minority Leader McConnell,

The recent fires in New York City and Philadelphia highlighted the continued need for fire safety in residential buildings. The deaths of 29 people, including 17 children, is a tragedy that joins a long list of residential housing fires that led to avoidable deaths. As sponsors of critical fire sprinkler legislation, we strongly urge you to take action on the *Public Housing Fire Safety Act* (H.R.2638, S.265) and the *High-Rise Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act of 2021* (H.R.6192, S.3346) to ensure the safety of both our communities and those who serve them.

Fire sprinklers are fundamental features of public safety. When properly installed, these affordable systems respond to fires quickly and effectively, controlling the spread of fatal flames and smoke. These systems are lifesaving – when compared to homes without fire sprinklers, civilian fire death and injury rates are 88 and 28 percent lower, respectively in homes with sprinklers. Additionally, the rate of firefighter injuries per fire in homes with sprinklers was 78 percent lower compared to homes without sprinklers.¹

Despite the well-known benefits of fire sprinklers, countless buildings across the United States do not have fire sprinklers. From 2015 to 2019, only an estimated 8 percent of the residential fires that local fire departments responded to had fire sprinklers.² Other studies suggest that only 42 percent of high-rise apartments and 15 percent of low-rise apartments are equipped with sprinklers.³ According to estimates provided by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, an estimated over 570,000 high-rise public housing buildings were built prior to the Federal Fire Safety Act of 1992 which required the installation of fire sprinklers in all new high-rise buildings. Moreover, there is no federal HUD regulation requiring fire sprinklers in low-rise public housing buildings.

¹ [U.S. Experience with Sprinklers \(nfpa.org\)](https://www.nfpa.org/research-and-statistics/research-and-statistics-topics/sprinklers)

² Ibid

³ [High-Rise Building Fires \(nfpa.org\)](https://www.nfpa.org/research-and-statistics/research-and-statistics-topics/sprinklers)

Therefore, as sponsors of lifesaving, fire sprinkler bills, we request immediate consideration of bicameral, bipartisan legislation that will address residential fire safety. Specifically, we urge action on:

- The *Public Housing Fire Safety Act* (H.R.2638, S.265), which will create a grant program for public housing agencies to install automatic sprinkler systems in certain public housing buildings. Additionally, it would collect data on the status of sprinkler installations to aid Congress with future fire safety recommendations.
- The *High-Rise Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act of 2021* (H.R.6192, S.3346), which will create an incentive for owners of high-rise buildings to install sprinklers by classifying automatic fire sprinklers retrofit property as 15-year-property.

The *Public Housing Fire Safety Act* and *High-Rise Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act of 2021* are pivotal, lifesaving bills. We urge you to quickly consider these bills to ensure that families and firefighters across America are safe from fire risk.

Sincerely,



BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN
Member of Congress



JOHN KATKO
Member of Congress



BILL PASCRELL, JR.
Member of Congress



JOHN RUTHERFORD
Member of Congress

cc:

Chairwoman Maxine Waters, House Committee on Financial Services
Ranking Member Patrick McHenry, House Committee on Financial Services
Chair Richard Neal, House Committee on Ways and Means
Ranking Member Kevin Brady, House Committee on Ways and Means
Chairman Sherrod Brown, Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
Ranking Member Patrick J. Toomey, Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
Chairman Ron Wyden, Senate Committee on Finance
Ranking Member Mike Crapo, Senate Committee on Finance